

A SUPPLEMENTARY REPORT COVERING THE ACTIVITIES IN MEXICO CITY OF ITS COUNSEL

Submitted to the National Committee on Education by Radio, September 6, 1933

By Armstrong Perry

After receiving instructions from the Committee to represent it at the North and Central American Radio Conference in Mexico City, I attended several meetings of the committees organized by the United States Department of State to prepare for this Conference. The Committee was represented in preliminary meetings also by Dr. Tracy F. Tyler, Commander T. A. M. Craven, and Mr. Horace L. Lohnes, and these gentlemen informed me concerning meetings which I did not attend.

The topic most discussed at these meetings was the proposed widening of the band of frequencies for broadcasting. The commercial broadcasters demanded, and fought for, frequencies between 160 and 220 kilocycles. They were supported in their demands by the Radio Manufacturers' Association. The discussion showed that the commercial broadcasters wanted these additional channels in order to increase the sale of time for advertising, and that the manufacturers wanted broadcasting on the new frequencies because the radio listeners would have to spend approximately half a billion dollars for new apparatus if they were to hear programs on the proposed channels. The proposal was defeated by the "mobile group", which included the United States Navy and Army, shipowners and aviation interests. This group objected to giving up the channels because, it was claimed, there were no other channels in which the mobile services could be accommodated without prohibitive expense or loss of efficiency. Commander Craven, on behalf of the National Committee, presented a compromise plan which although well received was not adopted.

Shortly before the date for the opening of the Conference, a confidential letter from the Department of State gave some information as to the position of the official delegation on the matter of widening the broadcast band. The position of the delegation on the matter of allocating frequencies to the different countries was never made known to me by the delegation and, so far as I know, no person or group outside the conference was informed by the delegation at any time. It appeared to be an official secret, revealed only through leakage.

Several days before the opening of the Conference I was approached by an official of the Chesapeake & Ohio Railroad who wanted to sell me space in an air-cooled car in which the official delegation was to make the trip to Mexico City. I reserved space. Then I was notified by this railroad official that the Department of State had notified the railroad that the car was to be reserved for the official delegation exclusively and I was offered space in another car. I inquired of the Department of State and was informed that the car was reserved for officials exclusively and that all space was taken. The railroad official reserved space for me in another car, which was entirely satisfactory to me. After the train left St. Louis three representatives of commercial radio corporations moved into the car reserved for government officials exclusively, and went through to Mexico City with the official delegation.

I arrived in Mexico City on the morning of July 8 and had a room at the Regis Hotel, which was the headquarters of the American delegation, until the morning of July 10, when I moved to a house selected from several recommended by a member of the staff of the American Embassy. I had a room there during the rest of my stay in Mexico.

On July 10 I attended the opening session of the Conference and remained until persons not officially connected with it were dismissed following the response to the address of welcome. So far as I know, only official delegates attended the remaining sessions.

On July 11 I called at the American Consulate and inquired if there were any regulations which would prevent or restrict my interviewing officials of other countries to exchange information on broadcasting. I was informed that there were no restrictions and that I was at liberty to make and develop any contacts that I desired.

On July 14 I interviewed the Ambassador of the United States and asked him the same question. He informed me that if I wished to place anything before the Radio Conference the proper procedure would be to request the Chairman of the American delegation to present it. I assured him that if I wished to have anything presented at the Conference I would follow this procedure.

Daily during the Conference I called at the Regis Hotel, where I talked frequently with the following: Hon. Eugene O. Sykos, Chairman of the American delegation; Hon. Roy Tasco Davis and Hon. Schuyler Otis Bland, the other members; Hon. Chas. R. Curtis, representing the Brinkley station; Mr. Arthur J. Costigan of R.C.A. Communications, Mr. C. W. Horn of National Broadcasting Company, Mr. Andrew Rine of the American delegation, Mr. J. S. W. Baldwin of the National Association of Broadcasters, Mr. E. K. Jett of the American delegation, Mr. Gerald C. Gross of the American delegation, Mr. Ralph M. Hointz of Globe Wireless, Mr. Arthur Scharf, radio attorney of Washington; Mr. Paul Segal, radio attorney, representing the American Radio Relay League; Dr. C. B. Jolliffe of the American delegation, Mr. Zimmerman, a radio man with American experience; Mr. and Mrs. H. L. Munol of the Brinkley station; Mr. H. L. Cornell, representing shipping interests; Dr. Irvin Stewart of the American delegation.

On July 27, after rumors indicated that the Conference would reach no agreement as to the allocation of channels to different countries, and that the Latin American delegations were incensed over the attitude of the delegation of the United States, I mailed to the heads of the Latin American delegations information concerning the financial results of broadcasting in different countries under different systems. A copy of this report, entitled "Financial Aspects of Radio Broadcasting", is attached. This information had been published in the Congressional Record, Senate Document 137, and the Bulletin of the National Committee, more than a year before. It had been sent to the United States Department of State, the Federal Radio Commission, and many other groups and persons in this and other countries interested in radio.

In making a telephone call to secure the address of one of the delegates, my secretary was connected with the delegate himself. He asked who wanted his address. She gave him my name. He said he would be glad to see me. She said that I merely wished to mail him some information. He repeated that he wanted to see me. I called and gave him the report. Thereafter he and other Latin American delegates asked me repeatedly for information. I loaned them official documents published by the United States Government, copies of "Education by Radio", clippings from "Broadcasting", "The New York Times", and the "United States News", and such books and other materials as were available.

On July 28 I was approached by two representatives of American commercial broadcasting in the lobby of the Regis. They demanded to know what the statement was that I had given to the Latin American delegations. I gave each of them a copy. I was asked why I had circulated this information. I explained that



gathering and disseminating information was part of my job, and asked them why they objected. I was then accused of dealing with the enemy. I told them that I had no reason for looking upon the Latin American delegations or countries as enemies of the United States. One of them replied that this conference was essentially a business deal and that in a business deal it was always customary to look upon the other party as an enemy and keep from him any information that might help his cause.

They then attacked the accuracy of my statements. I asked them to point out any error that I had made so that I might send out a corrected statement to the persons who had received the present one. They were unable to point out any error, but thought the profits reported for Australia might be more or less. I suggested that if there were anything wrong with the report I would be glad to send any report which they might prepare to the same persons who received mine. I was then told that they had no later or more accurate figures and would not give them to the delegates if they had them.

I explained that in gathering the information in foreign countries I had been introduced by officials of our own country and that usually an interpreter from the staff of a consulate had assisted me; then my report of the interviews had been submitted in writing to the consulate, and by the consulate to the persons interviewed, and all corrections suggested had been made. The two Americans who were attacking me then expressed contempt for the United States Department of State.

One of these men objected particularly to that part of my report in which I quoted figures that he himself had prepared and which were published in Senate Document 137. He said they were out-of-date and misleading. I asked him if he could give me later or more accurate figures, so that I could send them to the delegations. He said none was available. I reminded him that I had included in my report also statements by a vice-president of his own organization bringing the information up to date in a general way for 1932 and saying something concerning 1933. He replied that, since I was present at the hearing where these statements were made, I must know that this official was confused and unreliable in his statements at the time. I reminded him that I had not quoted from the extemporaneous statements of the official, but from the typewritten statement which he had carefully prepared for the hearing. He again expressed lack of confidence in this official.

Finally, I invited these men to prepare statements for me to submit for publication in the Bulletin of the National Committee. One of them said that he would do so.

I called on the various Latin American delegates and secured information on broadcasting in their respective countries. This has been added to our files of information gathered in visits to 38 countries, interviews with officials of 77 countries, and world-wide correspondence.

Several times I was asked how many broadcasting channels were needed by the United States. In reply I always quoted statements made to me by competent American engineers that 90 channels were needed but that equally good coverage, or better, could be maintained by fewer stations provided present power limitations were removed and stations scientifically located, powered, and channeled with a view to providing the best possible national coverage.

The Latin Americans expressed appreciation of the attitude of the National Committee in exchanging information.

Other information is contained in my report which was submitted to the members of the Committee soon after the close of the Conference. Prior to its publication in "Education by Radio", copies of this report were submitted to all official delegations which participated in the Conference, and to other interested groups and persons, with the request that any inaccuracies be pointed out. Judge Sykes, chairman of the American delegation, has declined to make any criticism. I recommend that any criticisms made be circulated with the report.

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